

To: Federal Communications Commission

I write to you in reference to the FCC's "Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" 05-311 on "video franchising".

Local franchising ensures that citizens and communities have control over the telecommunications and media in their area, and that telecommunications companies are accountable to the needs of consumers. Without local franchises local communities will be stripped of an adequate way to make sure companies charge reasonable rates, respond to customer complaints, or that they provide universal service. Our local Cable office has been instrumental in pushing the cable companies to respond to complaints and other issues within our community.

Local franchises are also vital in the operation of local Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) TV. In Montgomery County, Maryland, these local cable stations provide support for truly local media and allow for the production and airing of programs which reflect the diversity of our community. PEG TV provides a place where the public can be informed about local government affairs; and where individuals and community organizations can express their views and opinions. I am a member of the Montgomery Community Television Board of Directors, one PEG TV channel, and employed by another. I am a strong supporter of the services provided by PEG channels, not only because it is my livelihood, but because it is one way in which citizens of our community can exercise their first amendment right to freedom of expression. I volunteer my time and expertise at Montgomery Community Television because I think it is an outlet that our community needs and utilizes.

Democracy works best when the widest range of ideas possible is made available to all people, and PEG TV plays an important role in doing this.

As a supporter of Public, Educational and Government TV in Montgomery County, Maryland, I strongly urge the FCC to maintain local franchises. Without this control at the local level, the quality of the telecommunications companies' costumer service will certainly decline; and the existence of PEG TV channels will be severely threatened.

Thank you for your time.